

## [Ethel Simon]

Beliefs and customs - Folk Stuff

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Arnold Manoff

ADDRESS 27 Hamilton Terrace

DATE Sept 20, 1938

SUBJECT FOLKLORE

1. Date and time of interview Sept. 19, afternoon
2. Place of interview Golden's Convalescent Home 176 St. Marmion Ave. Bronx
3. Name and address of informant Ethel Simon As above
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

## Library of Congress

A large converted private house on a rather quiet street. Room containing four beds. Furnished in hospital style. Atmosphere that of hotel in the Catskills. Noisy and bickering. This is a home for the aged who are invalided. Wooden floor, shabby furniture, paint peeling on the walls. Unprofessional nurses and a shirt-sleeved beer-smelling orderly.

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK

FORM B Personal History of Informant

STATE NEW YORK

NAME OF WORKER Arnold Manoff

ADDRESS 27 Hamilton Terrace, New York

DATE Sept. 20, 1938

SUBJECT FOLK LORE

1. Ancestry RUSSO-JEWISH, PEASANT PEOPLE

2. Place and date of birth Born 83 years ago in Smargon, a village in Russia near the Polish border

3. Family

4. Places lived in, with dates

Lived in America some 30 years, 15 years on the East side the rest in the Bronx around Prospect Ave.

## Library of Congress

5. Education, with dates
6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates
7. Special skills and interests
8. Community and religious activities
9. Description of informant Blind white-haired big old woman. Huge lined face still unwrinkled, wrathful and owlsh. Hair unkempt and shaggy.
10. Other Points gained in interview

Informant knew she had not much longer to live. Less than a year.

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FOLKLORE

NEW YORK

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

[STATE NEW YORK\*1]

NAME OF WORKER [Arnold Manoff\*2]

ADDRESS 27 Hamilton Terrace

DATE Sept 20, 1938

SUBJECT Folk Lore

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Informant was seated near her bed staring blankly at a little table in front of her upon which was her lunch. Two other old women in the same room were lunching. One was being fed by a nurse. When I told informant who I was (I have known her for many years) she brightened suddenly and while she groped for her food refusing to let me aid her, we spoke in Yiddish.

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### GOLDEN'S CONVALESCENT HOME

You see. They give me to eat, chicken, all sorts of things. Aa but its not like at home. It has no taste. Today have they given me chicken. Yesterday have they not given me chicken. Who knows. They have everybody given chicken yesterday. Me had they left out. They know I can't see. Let them catch the cholera. They are murderers. (Then softly without venom) It is raining in the street. All day long. I know. Yesterday too it rained. How is it outside now? Still raining. See that empty bed over there. She died Friday. One hundred and fifty thousand dollars. She died. (laughing) A lot good it did her. I feel not to talk much. There is enough trouble in the world. What is the use to cry all the time? What hears from the outside? Are they killing themselves yet? What is he doing now? I think Czechoslovakia will fight with him. It used to be good when I had my radio 2 in the house. I knew everything that was happening. I remember about Napoleon. They put him on a little island somewhere. A soldier came to him and asked him did he want poison. Oh this was long ago. You would not know about it. But he did not take the poison. He was not through. That's how it is. He came back but he went to Russia and the whole army got frozen. They all died from the cold. I think Hitler if he goes to war now will get the same thing. How is it in Japan?

Don't tell this to anyone. Listen this is to laugh. When I lived on Home Street all the women started to go to school, old ones, young ones, everybody. A new madness. Everybody wanted to learn to read the English papers. This was two years ago. Yes. And me. I let them talk it in to me. So one fine day I pick myself up. I take my feet on my shoulders and I go to school There is a young teacher there and it is very funny. I squeeze myself into

## Library of Congress

the little seat and I sit. Inside I am dying laughing. You know. I am a laughing one. I do this. I do that. I am dying laughing. Do me something. The young one she writes on the blackboard in English. It is easy. I know what she is trying to do. She writes in English, goat. And then she says in Yiddish, goat. And then she asks what is a goat in Yiddish and she wants they should answer her in English. Listen good. There is woman there, an old little one, she understands not a word. Hardly does she know what is going on. What is a goat the young one asks. A pretty one the young one. I felt for her. Such dumb women to teach English. The old one picks herself up. She looks this way. She looks that way. A goat she says is maa maa like that maa maa. In me it explodes the laughing. Maa maa makes the old one like a sheep. I can't hold myself in. I let out the whole laughing and I can not bear it anymore. I am ashamed. It is so comical. I pick myself up and I go home. That's how I went to school. What did I need school. Everything I want I used to hear on the radio. There was one, the limping philosopher he called himself. Now has he a band and singers. Everything is on the radio. He called himself the limping philosopher. What it means? Aa — a limping one. He limped. You think there will be war? What does he say, the bolshevik, Stalin? And what is in Palestine? England England; she could stop it. They're all the same. Well, I think I'll take myself a little sleep now. I sleep so much here. (She sighed, her big shaggy head drooped tiredly. I got up to go. She probably heard me getting up from the chair) Go healthy. Go healthy, she muttered sleepily.